# A SERMON OF THE EPIPHANY,

Preached in the

# Queen Dowagers

Chappel at *Somerſet-Houſe*, upon *Twelfth* Day, *January* the 6th. 1686.

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Ecce Magi ab oriente venerunt Jeroſolymam, dicentes: Ubi eſt, qui natus eſt Rex Judæorum? vidimus enim Stellam ejus in oriente, & venimus Adorare eum.

MAT. 2. 1, 2.

*Behold, there came Wiſe Men from the Eaſt to Hieruſalem, ſaying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have ſeen his Star in the Eaſt, and are come to adore him.*

WHEN the worlds Redeemer was born in *Bethlem*, a ſolemn Embaſſey was ſent from Heaven, to acquaint poor Shepherds, that the *Meſſias* had then began his Reign. About the ſame time, a Star was appointed to ſummon from remoter Countries, three crown'd Heads, to pay Adoration to this new-born King. In the Shepherds, who were near at hand, he was diſcovered to the Jews, to whom he was firſt ſent, and amongſt whom, he was to be born: In the wiſe Men, who came from forrein parts, he was made known to the *Gentiles*, who were at a dreadful diſtance from God and Heaven. *Manifeſtatus eſt*, Judæis *in paſtorum propinquitate gen-* *Serm. 3. de Epiph.*

 *tibus*

*tibus in magorum longinquitate*, ſays St. *Auguſtin.* The Shepherds were invited to this honour, becauſe the meaneſt and pooreſt ſort of men: the Wiſe men, becauſe as St. *Auguſtin* obſerves, *Magicians* (tho' in this differing from many other Fathers, who ſay the word *Magi* ſignifies philoſophers) but St. *Auguſtin* will have them *Magicians*, & conſequently enormous ſinners. Theſe paſſages were a Preludium to the Doctrine our Saviour afterward preach'd and practis'd, in chooſing the meaneſt and moſt contemptible things in this world, and labouring chiefly for the Salvation of ſinners; to the end St. *Auguſtin* ſays, *Ut nullus magnus ſuperbiret, nullus infirmus deſperarer: That the Great Ones here on earth, might not ſwell with pride; and that no ſinner, how hainous ſoever, ſhould be dejected and caſt into deſpair.*

By this, our Saviour proved himſelf the
*Epheſ.* 2. 14. great Corner-ſtone, *Lapis Angularis*, as the ſcripture calls him, uniting to the ſame head, and in the ſame faith, the heretofore ſo oppoſite people *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and with them raiſing one Spiritual building, the Catholick Church compoſed of them both, *fecit utraque unum.* Here the old feuds between *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that had ſo long divided the world, were at laſt end-
11, 22. 62. 25. ed, and the Propheſie of *Eſay* made good; That the time ſhould come when the *Lamb* and *Woolf* ſhould

ſhould peaceably feed together in the ſame Paſture; and the *Lyon* and the *Oxe* eat quietly in one Manger. *Lupus & Agnus piſcentur ſimul, Leo & Bos comedent paleas*: That is, the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, heretofore as irreconcileable as ravenous *Wolves* with the innocent *Lambs*, as hungry *Lyons* with *Sheep* or *Oxen*, this day are reconciled at the Manger of our new born *Jeſus*, joyfully united in the ſame Faith of the true *Meſſias* there preſent, by which their ſouls were nouriſh'd and made able to ſeek after eternal Glory. Here was verified to the latter, what the ſame Prophet affirms: *puer parvulus minabit eos*; the mentioned ſavage and ravenous creatures, ſhall forget their natural cruelty, their bloody antipathy, and become ſo gentle, as to be joyned together in the ſame yoke, with what they uſed to devour; render'd ſo tame, that an infant-child ſhall lead them.

God's mercy never appeared ſo aſtoniſhing, as in this miraculous call of the *Gentiles* to the true Faith; man's weakneſs never can prove more fatal, than by abuſing ſo ſignal a favour: Happy we *Gentiles*, who were called after ſo admirable a manner; thrice unhappy *Gentiles*, if we abuſe ſo infinit a bleſſing. The prodigy of mercy that ever moſt aſtoniſhed the world, was the calling us *Gentiles* upon this happy day

to

to the true Faith, as I ſhall prove in my firſt part. The greateſt miſery man can fall under, is not to correſpond with ſo undeſerv'd a Grace, as I ſhall ſhew in my ſecond Part. Theſe two Points make the diviſion of my diſcourſe, and the Subject of your favourable attention, which I ſhall crave, after we have invok'd the aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit, begging the Virgin Mother to joyn with us in ſo neceſſary a Petition. *Ave Maria.*

The Birth of our Great *Meſſias*, and the miraculous diſcovery of it made to the *Jews*, was a gracious effect of his ever to be ador'd mercy; yet we may in ſome meaſure truly term it an act of Juſtice; becauſe in this, we find fulfilled ſeveral Divine promiſes, made by God in recompence of that ſignal faith, and abſolute obedience, ſo eminent in many of his Loyal ſervants. *Firſt* to an *Abraham*; *Benedicentur in ſemine tuo omnes Gentes, quia obediſti voci meæ. And in thy ſeed all*
Gen. 22. 18. *Nations ſhall be bleſt, becauſe thou haſt obey'd my voice.* And then likewiſe to *Jacob*, that the Royal Scepter ſhall not depart from the Race of *Juda*,
Gen. 49. 10. till the *Meſſias* appear'd, *Non auferetur Sceptrum de* Juda, *donec veniat qui mittendus eſt.* And often to *David* in conſideration of his good Government, his Saintly life, his zeal in his Makers Service. By theſe promiſes we find the Prophets

phets rais'd to a pious impatience, for the arrival of that happy moment; *propter* Sion *non tacebo, & propter* Hieruſalem *non quieſcam donec oriatur ut ſplendor Juſtitiæ ejus.* *For* Sion *and* Jeruſalem *I will never reſt till the bright Sun of Juſtice its Saviour ſhall riſe as a Fire, as a burning Lamp.* At other times they beg of the Heavens to *ſhower him down*; and ſomtimes beſeech him to *break through them*; ſo impatient were they for his appearance: Theſe zealous petitions, theſe languiſhing ſighs after the Worlds Redeemer, deſerv'd ſome little conſideration in the Court of Heaven, merited in ſome manner, as Divines obſerve, the actual appearance of this Celeſtial Comforter: Therefore God Almighty told them at laſt for their comfort, *Propter miſeriam inopum, & gemitum pauperum, nunc exurgam, dicit Dominus*: *For the miſeries of my afflicted and diſconſolate people, for the ſighs of my poor ſervants who have long languiſhed to ſee and feel the effects of my ſaving Providence, I will now come to their aſſiſtance.*

*Eſay.* 62. 1.

*Pſal.* 11. 5.

Although they were often a rebellious Nation, they were the Children of an *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*; Names ſacred both in Earth and Heaven, for whoſe ſakes alone, God had ſpar'd them, in the worſt of times: and therefore, when *Moſes* their Prophet and Governour, ſtood in need of a favourable audience, they generally

generally petitioned in the name of these great Men, to whom God had tyed himself by oath,
*Exod.* 32. 13. as *Moses* minds him, after their Apostacy, in adoring the Golden Calf, *Quibus juraſti per temetipſum.* Although it be true, that they too too often fail'd, yet they and their Ancestors, were the only people, that had brought down the worship of the True God from mans creation; never wanting in the height of their disorders, some faithful servants of Heaven, true worshippers of the only divinity; as appears by
3. *Reg.* 19. 3. the answer made to the Prophet *Elias*, when he thought piety at the lowest ebb: so among both living and dead, they never wanted powerful advocates to plead their Cause, to interpose between the People and their offended Maker. Some had fail'd, others had still faithfully served him; some blasphemed his holy Name, others sung his praises day and night: when
*Maccab.* 1. 2. there was one of the race of *Jacob* so weak, that he sacrific'd to Idols, by the command of *Antiochus*, there was a *Mattathias* so zealous, as to immolate the unfortunate wretch, upon the same Altar, and so repair'd the Insolence. When
*Numb.* 25. 8. there was a *Zimri* so impious, as to defile himself with an unfortunate *Midianite*, there was a *Phineas* so repleniſh'd with the zeal of the Lord, that he could not suffer the indignity, but sacri-

fic'd

fic'd upon the place, the two Criminals to the divine Juſtice. *Perfodit ambos ſimul, kill'd them both*; and ſo by his zeal ſav'd the race of *Iſrael*. Nay, at the very time the *Meſſias* appear'd, although there was a monſtrous *Herod*, then a *Jew* by Profeſſion, that thirſted after the Blood of this innocent Lamb; there was at the ſame time an old *Simeon*, repleniſhed with the holy Ghoſt, who expected with impatience the happy moment, deſiring to live for no other end, but that he might only ſee this ſweet Babe, and imbrace him in his arms; after which happens, he ask'd for his own diſmiſſion from this world. *Nunc dimitte tuum ſervum Domine*: Begging his Life might be clos'd with that Exſtacy of Love, with which he was wrapt at that charming paſſage. In fine, although few honoured him, as Redeemer, when firſt born; yet we find within the precincts of *Judæa*, a band of pious Shepherds, a Propheteſs *Anna*, a faithful *Joſeph* and *Mary*, that gave him the honour and adoration due to his Divine Majeſty. From hence we may conclude, that although the *Jew*'s Call to believe in, and adore the true *Meſſias*, was an effect of God's infinite Bounty and Mercy, ~~yet it~~ was in ſome meaſure proper and convenient. *Luke.* 2. 29.

After this, dear Chriſtians, ſhould I lay before you the ſad condition of the *Gentiles*,

when our Saviour came to redeem the world,
Rom. 1. as 'tis deſcribed by St. *Paul*, 'twill appear the moſt deplorable, that unfortunate man was ever condemned to, they knew the eternal Power, the inviſible Majeſty, of an incomprehenſible God, by the creatures he had made; yet they were ſo ſenſleſs and ſtupid, *Stulti facti ſunt*, as to give the ſupream worſhip due only to this adorable Divinity; to Birds, Beaſts, Crocodiles, and Serpents: and ſo prefer'd the laſt, and moſt deſpicable of Creatures, before the All-Puiſſant and eternal Creator. *Servierunt Creaturæ, potius quam Creatori.* And therefore, St. *Paul* ſays, God juſtly deliver'd them over to the Tyranny of the moſt ignominious of Paſſi-
Ver. 25. ons, *in Paſſiones ignominiæ*; men and women
26 perverting the order of Nature, by the moſt infamous, and monſtrous wayes, that human corruption could invent; moſt unhamanly revenging themſelves upon one another, and this as the chaſtiſement, and juſt reward of their Idolatryes, and other Crimes; *Mercedem*
27. *quam oportuit Erroris ſui in temetipſis recipientes*: ſo abandon'd by their Maker, whom they had firſt forſaken, he *delivered them over to a reprobate ſence*, that they might act more like brute
28. Beaſts, than reaſonable Creatures; *Ut faciant ea quæ non conveniunt*; defil'd and infamous by

all

all ſorts of iniquity; Avarice, Impurity, Pride, Sedition, Murder, Theft; envious malicious enemies to mankind, and hateful to God, *Detractores Deo odibiles*; void of all Sence, of all Modeſty, of all good Nature, of all Fidelity, without Pity, without Mercy, *Inſipientes abſque fœdere, abſque miſericordia.* Such monſters of Vice, that ſcarce any thing above Hell, could be an Emblem of them, as appears by what St. *Peter* ſaw in his viſion, that told him, they were not excluded from the Goſpel; they were then laid before him, as *brute Beaſts, Serpents, ſavage Creatures,* as the greek Text relates it. Nay, they were ſo deſpicable to the Jewiſh Nation, that God Almighty, did not think any thing could more mortify the *Iſraelites*, than to tell them, their Crimes had leſſened them ſo in the ſight of God, that the very *Gentiles* ſhould be prefer'd before them. *Provocabo eos in eo, qui non eſt Populus*: I will provoke them to jealouſy, and envy, in ſeeing thoſe abandoned wretches, prefer'd before them, who were never treated as yet, but as People deſign'd for ſlaughter: *In Gente ſtulta irritabo illos*; I will provoke them to rage and fury, in ſeeing ſuch Sots and Ideots, become my favourites; a People, with whom he had never vouchſafed to treat, to whom he had never made the leaſt

30. *Acts.* 10.

31. *Deut.* 32. 21.

Ephes. 2. 12. promiſe of mercy: *Promiſſionis ſpem non habentes.* The ſacred Hiſtory is fill'd with the formidable effects of his Juſtice; as when the *Iſraelites* were commanded to murder whole Countyes, Man, Woman, and Child, without any diſtinction of age, ſex, or condition: whole Kingdoms maſſacred by one another; the *Caldeans* by the *Perſians*, the *Perſians* by the *Grecians*, the *Grecians* by the *Romans*; and this for the ſpace of ſome thouſands of years, without any account of particular Perſons, for whoſe Salvation we have ground to hope. Then if we proceed farther, and caſt an eye over the vaſt Continent of *Europe*, *Aſia*, *Africa*, and *America*, we ſhall find all theſe vaſtly extended Countryes, Infamous by all the abominations, that reprobate man could invent; ſcarce a Creature ſo deſpicable in whole nature, as Crocodiles, and Serpents, that by ſome or other was not treated as a God. The deteſtable diſorders of this nature, were not only found in ſome corner of the World, but in all nations where the Sun gave light; except that poor ſpot of Ground call'd *Paleſtine*: this not for a year or two, but for thouſands of years, without affording any ſervants of the true God, that might mediate for the reſt; verifying to the letter in whole Empires, what *David* ſaid of the *Jews*, by exaggeration: *Non eſt qui faciat*

Pſal. 52. 4. *bonum.*

*bonum non eſt uſque ad unum.* In innumerable Kingdoms, not one, that we can name; and in the whole worlds of *Gentiles*, we have certainty of none's ſalvation, but of one poor ſingle *Job*, among ſo many millions, from the days of *Abraham*, till the coming of the *Meſſias*: as for all our unfortunate forefathers near home, in *Britany*, *France*, *Germany*, and all *Europe*, we cannot name one, nor have any good reaſon to affirm, that Heaven had one true ſervant amongſt them; all Pagans, all Idolaters, all juſtly for their Crimes, hated by the Almighty, and excluded from Heaven.

This is the real Deſcription, and true Character of the *Gentiles* for ſo many Ages. What muſt we then ſay of that Mercy, which takes ſuch Monſters into favour, inſtructs them in the true Faith, puts them in the certain Way, that leads to Heaven: This is the higheſt inſtance of an infinite Mercy, that the world ever admir'd; it ſeems the great Maſter-peice, bv which he procures his Mercy to be above all his Works: to indulge ſuch as once faithfully ſerved him, though ſo unhappy as ſometimes to run aſtray; to bleſs that Race, whoſe Anceſtors have been Loyal, to preſerve a Country which never wanted ſome true Servants of God, although many fail'd in their Duty, ſeems worthy

thy a Divine bounty; but to court ſuch as had never been Loyal, to take whole Nations into favour, whoſe forefathers to a man (for what appears to us) had been falſe and treacherous, to pour his benedictions upon vaſt Kingdoms, that had never produc'd (that we know of) one truly obedient Creature; this ſeems, according to our comprehenſion, acting above the rules of Mercy.

*Rom.* 5. 20. That expreſſion of St. *Paul*, That God's Grace never ſo overflow'd, as when iniquity ran at the highth, was never ſo verified to the letter as in the tranſactions of this day; *Ubi abundavit delictum ſuperabundavit & gratia.* A Phyſitians Skill never appears ſo admirable, as in Curing a deſperate Diſeaſe; God's mercy's never ſo Adorable, as in pardoning where there ſeems not to have been the leaſt inducement. The *Gentiles* crimes and abominations, had cried out to Heaven for Vengeance; during many Ages, they had infected the whole Univerſe, they had debauched whole Nations, perverted the uſe of all Creatures, prophan'd all the Elements, ſtood at defiance with God and Heaven, almoſt ever ſince the Creation; their Underſtanding's buried in darkneſs and blindneſs, their Hearts harden'd and ſtupified

with

with ſin and ſenſuality, their whole Nature's perverſe and malitious in the higheſt degree; Therefore, that Grace that muſt clear and illuminate theſe clouded and dark Underſtandings, that muſt ſoften theſe obdurate and ſtony Hearts, that muſt rectifie theſe crooked and depraved Wills, that muſt change the Nature of ſuch habitually perverſe Wretches, that muſt make them hate what they lov'd and ador'd; honour and imbrace what they hated and abhor'd; that Grace which works theſe miracles, is juſtly called a miraculous and prodigious Grace; a ſuperabundant Grace; *Superabundavit & Gratia*; likewiſe that mercy that can forget ſo many *thouſands* of years provocations of his Majeſty, that can remit ſo many *milions* of Blaſphemies and Idolatries, with which whole Lives have been prophan'd; whole Ages have been defil'd; this mercy that pardons ſuch abominations, thoſe Graces that Reform and Sanctify ſuch Perverſe and Malitious Souls, and fix them wholly upon God and Heaven; ſuch Graces muſt ſurpaſs all the favours ever beſtowed on man, ſince the mention'd enormities exceed all the crimes ever committed againſt God: *Ubi ſuperabundavit iniquitas, ſuperabundavit & Gratia.*

It was, dear Chriſtians, upon this day we were made happy, by that inconceavable Mercy, and prodigious Grace; when that propitious Star invited us *Gentiles* to the Sacred Crib of our New-Born *JESUS*, where we were made partakers of thoſe ſaving truths, for want of which our unfortunate Anceſtors were miſerably loſt. It was in theſe *three* Kings, as St. *Leo* obſerves, that the whole body of the *Gentiles* (notwithſtanding their rebellions and enormities of ſo old a date) were honour'd and bleſs'd with a gratious admittance, both to believe in, and adore then preſent, the only true God and Author of all things: *Adorant in tribus magis, omnes populi, univerſitatis Authorem;* and now the knowledg of the true *Meſſias*, the ſo-long-unknown way to Heaven, the Adoration of the true God was no longer the prerogative of the race of *Jacob*, a priviledg of the Country of *Judea*, but a benediction extended to the whole world: *Non in Judæa tantum Deus, ſe in toto orbe ſit notus.*

*Serm.* 3, *de Epiph.*

Now it was, that *Abraham* began to multiply his Race, by the numerous addition of the *Gentiles*, call'd the ſons of *Promiſe;* and we heretofore the undutiful children, who in our Anceſtors ſhamefully degenerated from ſo ſaintly a Parent; enter this day upon the Poſſeſſion

of

of that glorious title, of the ſons of *Abraham*, by inheriting his Faith; *Intret in Patriarcharum familiam Gentium plenitudo*, ſayes St. *Leo*. The whole body of the *Gentiles* begin this day to be incorporated in the holy family of the Patriarchs: *Electi generis dignitatem, fides omnibus facit eſſe communem.* One Faith communicated to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, has rendred the dignity of being the Choſen people of God common to them both. Oh, inconceaveable Mercy! Oh ever to be ador'd Bounty! we, who as St. *Paul* obſerves out of the Prophet *Hoſea*, were never yet honour'd ſo far, as to be own'd a people belonging to God, regarded by Providence, are this day honour'd both with the Title, and advantage, of being call'd and treated as his Choſen People; *Vocabo non plebem meam plebem meam.* We, the Object of Heavens hatred for ſo many thouſands of years, call'd the deteſted people of God; this day changed the dreadful quality of Enemy to God, into that of Friend and Favorite of Heaven, *Vocabo——non dilectam, dilectam.* We that ſeem'd excluded from any ſhare in his Mercies, mark'd out, by his juſtice, for chaſtiſement, and ſlaughter; without hopes of Pity or Pardon, are this day the Object of his Love and Mercy; *Vocabo——non miſericordiam; conſecutam, miſericordiam* Rom. 9. 25.

*ſecutam.* We, who, as the ſame Apoſtle obſerves, had no title to claim any ſhare in the
Epheſ. 2. 12. *Meſſias*; *Eratis ſine Chriſto*; never included in any treaty or covenant made with God, *Hoſpites teſtamentorum*: So utterly abandon'd in all appearance, that he calls us people, for whom Providence ſeem'd not concern'd: *Sine Deo in hoc mundo*; *without a God in this world.* After theſe great and innumerable calamities, and ſcourges; after this fatal and long Oblivion of God and Heaven; after ſo many Ages being deſtitute of all efficacious means to Salvation; after thoſe ſeeming irreconcileable feuds of ſo antient a date, that divided us from the people of God, we are now miraculouſly united with his deareſt Servants and Friends, in the ſame Faith, in the ſame Hope, in the ſame Meſſias; who is the common peace-maker
Epheſ. 2. 14. between us both, *ipſe enim eſt pax noſtra*; who has happily united us both, in one Church, in one Myſtical Body; *Qui fecit utraque unum.* The antient ſeparation, that kept us at ſuch a diſtance both from God's people, and his Kingdom; that dreadful wall, that hindred all communication with God and his Servants, is this day broken down; *Medium parietem maceriæ ſolvens*: No more diſtinction of Jew and and Gentile; Mercies are equally extended to them

them both; the ſo long hidden way to Heaven is now laid open to all; Jew and Gentile have free acceſs by CHRIST to the Eternal FATHER, being directed by the ſame divine Spirit. *Per ipſum habentes acceſſum ambo, in uno ſpiritu ad patrem.* Theſe illegitimate children, theſe ſons of bondage and ſlavery; theſe dogs, as our Saviour himſelf ſtyl'd them, ſhall be now call'd as they are, ſayes St. *Paul, Vocabuntur filii Dei vivi; Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and domeſticks in the ſame Houſe of God.* Nay, he added, that we now are honoured, in being part of that ſacred Structure, in which God himſelf pleaſes to reſide, by his divine Spirit; *Vos coædificamini in habitaculum Dei, in Spiritu.* Thoſe hearts that were defiled with all Impurities, thoſe Powers that were prophan'd with all Enormities, thoſe Souls that were poſſeſs'd by the Father of Darkneſs, deform'd, and hideous, as become his habitation; are now more Beautiful than the riſing Sun; ſo enrich'd with all the ornaments of Grace and Vertue; ſo happily beautifi'd and adorn'd, as to be choſen for that agreeable Manſion where God himſelf reſides. *Vos coædificamini in habitaculum Dei.* Did ever the divine Mercy work ſuch wonders as in making ſuch Enemies worthy to be his boſom Friends?

*Ver.* 18.

*Rom.* 9. 26. *Oſee* 1. 10. *Epheſ.* 2. 19.

*Ver.* 22.

Such hideous Monſters, Angels of Light; ſuch ſons of darkneſs, ſhining pillars in the Heavenly *Hieruſalem?* This, without diſpute, dear Chriſtians, is the moſt eminent act of Bounty and Mercy, ever performed in the behalf of Man: But if abus'd by our Ingratitude, will make us the moſt Unfortunate of Creatures; as I ſhall prove in my Second Part.

*Second Part.*

GOd's Mercies never appear'd more eminently above his other Works, than in the Call of us *Gentiles* to the true Faith: yet we find his Juſtice to have left whole Kingdoms which ſtill miſerably ly waſt: How many Millions have never heard of the true *Meſſias*? how many Countryes, that once receiv'd him, have again fallen off, and are over-run with Infidelity? How many, that pretend to follow him, obey only by halfes, admitting his Doctrine in part, and reject what they pleaſe? In fine, dear Chriſtians, how many here preſent, have the grief to ſee their friends, kindred, and neareſt relations, unfortunately engaged in Schiſm and Error? whilſt they themſelves are ſo happy, as to be partakers of the true Faith, which can only lead to eternal Bliſs. If any here ask, how it comes

comes to paſs, that ſome have been Call'd, others Abandon'd, that we are Chriſtians, others Pagans; you partakers of the true Faith, others left in Schiſms and Hereſies; you the happy object of his Mercy, another of his Juſtice and Wrath; here humane reaſon is at a ſtand, and muſt with all humility and ſubmiſſion cry out with the great Apoſtle: *O altitudo divitiarum ſapientiæ et ſcientiæ Dei!* O the profound abyſs of the treaſures, both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of GOD! his Secrets are too deep for our fathom; his Æconomy and Conduct are above our reach, his Wayes are incomprehenſible, his Judgments inſcrutable; *Incomprehenſibilia ſunt Judicia ejus, inveſtigabiles viæ ejus.* To whom has he ever opened his Secrets? Who has he ever made his Counſellor? Therefore St. *Auguſtin*, contemplating the inſcrutability of this myſtery, why one was Call'd, another Left; declares frequently in his Works, he can give no other anſwer to it, than what St. *Paul* has left us: *O Altitudo!* O the profound Abyſs! and for ſuch as are not ſatisfied with this anſwer, he bids them conſult ſome more learned than *Aug. Quærant Auguſtino doctiorem*: But he adviſes them to be careful they meet not with ſuch as are too preſumptuous: *Sed caveat ne inveniat preſumptores.* His Scholler St. *Proſper*, eſteems it

*Rom.* 11. 33.

*De ſpu, & Lit. Cp.* 33.

*In Obec.* 14. *Vincent.*

a myſtery lodg'd only in the divine Breaſt; far enough above the reach of humane comprehenſion, & that *none* ought to attempt the knowledg. *Nec poſſibile comprehendere, nec licitum inveſtigare.* And therefore this knowledge ought to ſatisfy every Chriſtian; that no man is in the way of Salvation, that is not call'd by God's mercy, and ſuſtained by his bounty; and that no man ſins, but by his own perverſe will; and no man periſhes, but by his own ſin and malice; and this without further ſearch or curioſity may and ought to ſatisfy every Chriſtian. *Cum ſcire ſufficeret, ab illo eſſe quod ſtatur, & ab illo non eſſe quod ruitur.* 'Tis moſt certain, no man ever miſcarried but by his own fault; no man was ever ſaved, but by God's Grace. But if you will farther know, why his Mercy draws one happy creature, out of the maſſe of perdition, and why his Juſtice leaves another abandon'd to a reprobate ſence: *O Altitudo!* The calling the firſt, was an inconceavable Mercy, the leaving the latter, an act of irreproachable Juſtice.

Therefore, dear Brethren, how infinitly great is the obligation of all Chriſtians, who have been the *Choſen* Favourites out of millions! To whom God has fully proved himſelf to be what St. *Paul* calls him, *Pater miſericordiarum*; *the Father of mercies*: ſuch priviledg'd perſons, may

may juſtly cry out with holy *David*, *Non fecit ſaliter omni nationi*; all Countryes and People, have not been treated with that tenderneſs and mercy as you have been; for all which we can give no reaſon on our ſide, that could deſerve this preference; for if we conſider the inclinations of thouſands of Infidels, they ſurpaſs us in the gifts of Nature; more mild, more humble, more compaſſionate, more charitable, more juſt in their dealings, than thouſands of us Chriſtians; and in all appearance, had they been call'd to the true Religion and Worſhip, would have excell'd us in Chriſtian Vertues. Yet by an inſcrutable ſecret of God's Judgments, they are left in ſin, and infidelity, for everlaſting reproach and contumely, *Vas in contumeliam*, whilſt you are prefer'd, without the leaſt deſert; choſen for everlaſting honour and glory: *Vas in honorem.* One is juſtly abandon'd for his ſins, another is one of the elect who deſerv'd as little: a *Peter* is call'd to Repentance, a *Judas* dies in Deſpair: this made St. *Paul* invite all *Gentiles* to enter into the contemplation of this ſurpriſing myſtery: *Vide ergo bonitatem et ſeveritatem Dei: Behold the bounty and ſeverity of God;* his ſeverity, to thoſe poor Creatures who were never call'd, who have ſin'd, aud never riſe again: *in eos quidem qui ceciderunt ſeveritatem*: and his bounty and inſcru-

*Pſal.* 147. 20.

*Rom.* 9. 21.

*Rom.* 11. 22.

inſcrutable mercy to you; *In te autem bonitatem Dei*: who have been call'd before millions to the true Faith, and true Church. Happy we, if grateful and faithful in our Maſters ſervice, *ſi permanſeris in bonitate*: If you remain in that happy ſtate, his mercy has plac'd you in; if you conſerve that faith, correſpond with thoſe graces he has heap'd upon you; otherwiſe you will be cut off from that divine Olive, into which you were grafted, *alioquin et tu excideris*. As it is an ineffable bleſſing to have been call'd to the true Faith, before thouſands more deſerving than we; ſo the abuſing ſo ſignal a grace, ſo infinit a favour, will prove ſo fatal an ingratitude, a crime of ſo black a die, as to render us more unworthy, more execrable in the ſight of Heaven, than thoſe unfortunate Pagans, that never heard of God or Chriſt.

This will evidently appear by a familiar example: Had any perſon here two Servants both Negligent and Undutiful, to an exorbitant degree; one for his Fault, you juſtly turn out of your ſervice, baniſh him your ſight, leave him without all hopes of ever being received into favour: The other, tho' equally guilty, is by pure favour pardon'd his paſt Faults, admitted into your Family, made your favorite, truſted with your ſecrets, diſpoſes

and

and governs all things under you, with more freedom and confidence than before he offended. Should this Favorite prove ſo ungrateful a wretch, as to abuſe your goodneſs, ſlight your kindneſs, vilify your favours ſo far, as wilfully to relapſe into all thoſe Faults for which your goodneſs once pardon'd him, and to which he returns again, without the leaſt ſence of gratitude, for your bounty toward him, in preferring him before his fellow-ſervant, who deſerv'd no worſe than he. Had any here ſo unworthy a ſervant, would you not eſteem this ingratitude, infinitely more criminal, than all the other ſervants whom you pardon'd not, ever did againſt you; who although faulty, yet never abus'd your patience, never inſulted over your bounty, never deſpis'd your favours, after ſo gracious a pardon, as this other was partaker of.

Our crime, dear Chriſtians, is infinitely more enormous than ſuch a ſervants; if we abuſe this ineffable Mercy with which we *Gentiles* were bleſt on this day, in being call'd to the faith of Chriſt. We were all unprofitable and criminal ſervants, equally guilty in our firſt-parents, and afterwards by our own wills, infinitely perfidious, infinitely rebellious againſt our Divine Maſter; for which enormi-

ties, millions of millions of unfortunate wretches were juſtly abandon'd, juſtly excluded from Faith and Heaven: when you, by an inſcrutable Mercy, have been call'd in your fore-fathers, to the true Faith: Had your pardon granted, your crimes remitted; you made members of the True Church; inſtructed in thoſe Heavenly Myſteries; made partakers of thoſe ſanctifying Sacraments, without which no Salvation; placed in the certain Way to Heaven, fortified with Divine Graces, inſtructed by ſaintly Documents, encouraged by moſt fatherly Promiſes, animated by the powerful Example of God made Man. 'Tis true, that Chriſt came for all, did ſufficiently for all, Dyed for all; yet millions were ſo unfortunate, as for their ſins, to be juſtly deprived of the knowledge, uſe, and application of ſo infinite and ſoverain a remedy to their unfortunate Souls; whilſt you, dear Chriſtians, who were equally undeſerving, equally ſtupid, equally blind, equally harden'd by Vice, equally criminal, ſhould have your eyes and underſtandings open'd, and illuminated by thoſe ſaving Truths our SAVIOUR came to Teach; your hearts warm'd, and your affections inflam'd, with his pretious Blood, and bitter Paſſion: your ſins blotted out by the infinite

value

value of that ineſtimable Ranſom, ſufficient to Redeem an hundred Worlds. *O Altitudo!*

This makes us, dear Brethren, the moſt happy of Creatures, if our Lives are a conſtant and grateful acknowledgment of ſo ſignal a Mercy and Favour; if we concur, and correſpond on our parts, with theſe ſurpriſing Graces: But on the contrary, if we live ſo, that our behaviour is not a conſtant expreſſion of our gratitude for ſo undeſerv'd a preference, and bleſſing; if the *Gentiles* (as St. *Paul* complain'd of the Converts of his dayes) are ſcandaliz'd and tempted by our behaviour, *To Blaſpheme the Name of GOD.* This will be the Crime of Crimes, after ſo ſignal, ſo miraculous, ſo undeſerv'd a preference of us before the greateſt part of Mankind; after this, to contemn him in our own perſons, and render him deſpicable to others, when we have been honour'd by him, in the higheſt degree our nature was capable of. This contempt of the higheſt inſtance of his Bounty and Mercy, this enormous ſin of Ingratitude, is ſo hateful in the ſight of our infinite Benefactor, that he declares, nothing ſo inſupportable, as the unjuſt, and unworthy returns of ſuch, as were once honoured with his Favour, and enriched by his Bounty: For as the Prophet *David* declares: *Si inimicus me-* *Pſal.* 54. 13.

*us maledixiſſet mihi, ſuſtinuiſſem utique.* If my enemy, whom I alwayes treated as ſuch, keeping him at a juſt diſtance, if Turk or Pagan, to whom as yet I have never open'd the ſecrets of Heaven, and myſteries of Salvation; if they, my alwayes declared enemies, ſhould blaſpheme my Holy Name, *maledixiſſet mihi*; The inſolence, tho' great, might have been ſuppoſed
Verſe 14. *ſuſtinuiſſem utique*: But for you, *Homo unanimis dux meus & notus meus*: You to whom I had united my ſelf as one Heart and one Soul; my dear and intimate Friends, lodg'd you in my own Sanctuary, fed you at my own Table, with the ſweet and delicious food of Angels: *Qui ſimul mecum dulces capiebas cibos*: Plac'd you in my Catholick Church, made a perfect reconciliation and union, between you and Heaven: *In domo Dei ambulavimus cum conſenſu*; after I had choſen you before millions, preſerv'd you before whole nations, ſaved you from perdition, reſcu'd you out of the Jaws of Hell: and that after all theſe high expreſſions of love & mercy; theſe innumerable titles that cry out for gratitude, and obedience; you ſhould turn my bitter enemies, and ſide againſt me.

What can the Divine Juſtice pronounce ſevere enough, againſt this barbarous and monſtrous ingratitude? The ſame prophet *David* tells

tells us in the following verſe, God will not have patience to expect their natural death, but will hurry them away without the leaſt warning; give them no time to Repent, no time to cry for Mercy; ſurpriſe them by a ſudden & unprovided death: *Deſcendant in Infernum viventes*: *Let them ſink alive into Hell.* This contempt of God's favours and mercies, this ſin of ingratitude, turns his Love into Hatred, as the ſame prophet *David* explicates at large in his 105*th.* Pſalm, where he numbers the Favours receiv'd by the Children of *Iſrael*; their delivery out of Bondage; their paſſing the Red Sea; their preſervation in the Deſart, with their ungrateful returns; their murmuring, their ſedition, their ſchiſm, their infidelity, their idolatry, their unhumane ſacrifices: all which abominations God had ſuffered for many centuries at the hand of the *Gentiles*, that knew him not; but when his choſen, and beloved people, his darling *Iſrael*, was ſo ſtupendiouſly ungrateful, as to villify all Favours receiv'd, and provoke him with theſe abominations; his patience could not bear it, but his Love was turn'd, as the prophet obſerves, not only into anger, but rage and fury: *Iratus eſt furore Dominus in Populum ſuum.* Fury, as Philoſophers obſerve, is not a common ſort of anger, but a rage, that

*Ver.* 16.

*Pſal.* 105.

*Ver.* 38.

is

is restless till it gluts its self, with blood and revenge: a rage, that is not appeas'd but by massacre & slaughter; a rage, which the wise man calls that kind of anger, that punisheth without bounds, chastises without pity, or mercy: *Non libet misericordiam erumpens furor*: A rage that is accompanied, as *Moses* says, with a devouring fire: *Ignis succensus est in furore meo*. A fire, that searches every corner of those melancholly infernal Caves, and will burn, as long as Hell shall last, *& ardebit usque ad Inferni novissima.*

Prov. 27. 3.

Deut. 32. 22.

This dreadful consequence of mans Ingratitude, this unhumane return for much eminent favours, made St. *Peter* explicate himself at large upon this point, that we might be sensible of such unworthy proceedings. *Si refugientes coinquinationes seculi, in cognitione Domini nostri, & salvatoris Jesu Christi.* Whomsoever have been so happy, as by the assistance of God's Grace, to fly from the dangerous infection of this world, when blest with the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus; *His rursus implicati superantur*: Yet shall be so unfortunate, so ungrateful, as to plung themselves a second time in their once renounced and forsaken disorders. What will be the consequence of such relapses, but that their present condition, is much more deplorable than their former; *Facta est posteriora,*

2 Pet. 2. 20.

*riora, deteriora prioribus.* Wherefore the ſame Apoſtle concludes, *Melius enim erat illis non cognoſcere vias Juſtitiæ.* They had better have remain'd in their ignorance and blindneſs, in their abominations and idolatry, never to have been bleſt with the Faith of the true *Meſſias*, the knowledge of the Law of God; never to have known the paths that lead to Heaven; *Quam poſtquam poſt agnitionem retrorſum converti*: then to be ſo miſerable, as after ſuch Divine Lights, to return again to our wayes of darkneſs. St. *Paul* in like manner told the *Jews*, who avail'd themſelves upon the account of Revelations which had been made to them, that God had confided to them the ſecrets of his Worſhip, the propheſies of their own, and the worlds future Happineſs: But alas! what advantage would they reap from theſe priviledges, if their lives were not an exact obſervance of this Law; if their lives were not ſquar'd to its Rules and Precepts? *Si prevaricator legis ſis,* ſayes St. *Paul*, if you break its commands; *Circumciſio tua præputium factum eſt*: your having that pledge of Gods kindneſs put into your hands, his Divine Law; your being mark't out for his peculiar people, your circumciſion, and all your priviledges, make you not leſs miſerable than the pooreſt Pagan. Had not the *Iſraelites*

Ver. 21.

Rom. 2. 25.

that

that Apoſtatiz'd under *Jeroboam*, better never have known the Law of the Lord of *Iſrael*, than to have turn'd his Honour to the Temples of *Idols*? Had not *Judas* better have remain'd the worſt of moſt obſtinate *Jews*, than to have heard the Law of Chriſt, and betray its Maker? Therefore our Saviour told the *Phariſees*, who were ſo zealous in gaining Proſelytes, that if their Converſion to the *Jewiſh* Law, were not accompanyed with an abſolute change of Manners, in ſuch as imbrac'd that Worſhip: *Facitis eum filium Gehennæ duplo quam vos.* The poor convert was more miſerable than ever, ſentenc'd a double damnation, for abuſing ſo ſignal a Call.

*Mat.* 23. 15.

But our Saviour, in St. *John*'s Goſpel, comes yet more home to our preſent point, when he told the *Jews*, to whom he preach't, before whom he wrought ſo many Miracles, to convince them he was the true *Meſſias*; the only way to Heaven, as he calls Himſelf: That all thoſe advantages not rightly us'd, would avail them nothing; but on the contrary, they had been more happy, never to have heard of the true *Meſſias*, or his Law: For as our Saviour ſaid, *Si non veniſſem, & locutus fuiſſem, peccatum non haberent.* If I had not appear'd amongſt you, & preach't my Goſpel, you had not been ſo criminal: but now, ſince I have open'd your eyes, convinc'd you with

*John.* 15. 22.

with Miracles, prov'd my Miſſion by your own Law and Prophets, *Excuſationem non habent de peccato ſuo*; They are left without excuſe. This dear Chriſtians, will be apply'd to us, who have been call'd before thouſands; who in appearance deſerv'd the grace better; ſince he has, as you have heard, prefer'd you before your neighbors, friends, and neareſt relations: given you a full knowledge of your Crimes, provided you with infallible Remedies againſt them, placed you in the certain way, if you will walk in it, of obtaining everlaſting bliſs: Therfore ſuch as correſpond not with theſe Graces, make not the right uſe of theſe Mercies, *Excuſationem & non habent de peccato ſuo*, will be deſtitute of all excuſe and defence, that might help to Save them. We cannot anſwer with Heathens and Infidels, that we knew not the Law; for it has been preach'd unto us; that we were ignorant our lives were ſo guilty and enormous; for our crimes have been clearly laid open before us: we cannot complain we wanted means to heat our *ſear'd Conſciences*; for moſt ſoverain Remedies have been put into our hands; we cannot complain we knew not the worlds *Meſſias*; for he has publiſht his coming and appearance, by innumerable Miracles, made known unto us: we cannot pretend the paths of Heaven are ſtill inacceſſable; for they

have been beaten, and made plain to any that does not wilfully ſhut his eyes; you have been ſet in them with ſuch certain directions, that nonothing but a wilful blindneſs could hinder you from walking ſteadily to eternal Bliſs: therefore if we run aſtray, its wholly our own fault, we are deprived of all defence, ſtruck dumb by a ſelf-conviction, *Excuſationem non habent de peccato ſuo*, no excuſe left to leſſen our doom.

Let me therefore, dear Chriſtians, conclude, earneſtly beſeeching you, as St. *Paul* did the *Epheſians*, *Obſecro ut digne ambuletis vocatione qua vocati eſtis*; to live as becomes men honoured with ſo merciful a Call: A Call that was the moſt undeſerv'd, moſt ſignal, moſt aſtoniſhing Grace that ſinful man could ever receive from Heaven; and conſequently our behaviour ought to be the moſt humble, the moſt grateful, moſt faithful & ſteady performance of all Chriſtian duties, that ever was ſeen in creatures: Let our dayly Meditation be, how upon this day, by an Omnipotent Mercy, after ſo many Thouſand years Rebellion, after the Crimes of ſo many Ages, the Contempt of GOD, the abuſe and prophanation of all his Creatures, for which we ſeem'd juſtly abandon'd for evermore to the ſlavery of Hell; we were happily ſnatch'd out of the Lyons Jaws, reſcu'd, as St. *Paul* ſayes, out of

*Epheſ.* 1. 1.

the

the hands of *the power of Darkneſs*: *Eripuit nos de poteſtate tenebrarum.* And happily tranſlated, *In Dei lumen & gloriam*: To the Light and Glory of GOD, made partakers of the light of his Divine Goſpel, which will, if follow'd, certainly direct you to the more bright and refulgent rayes of Eternal Glory. Remember hourly, as St. *Leo* ſayes, *Memento cujus capitis & corporis ſis membrum*: To what Head you are this day United, and of what Body you are made happy members: In a word, ſayes he, *Agnoſce Chriſtiane dignitatem tuam.* Own Chriſtian man, and contemplate thy new dignity. *Et noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri converſatione redire.* For ſhame, degenerate not ſo far, diſgrace not your ſelves to that degree, as to return to thoſe mean unworthy Baſe Ways, that diſhonour'd the Life of Man, before this happy Call and Converſion.

*Col.* 1.. 13.

*Serm.* 1. *de Nati.*

Let's imitate the firſt-fruits of us *Gentiles*, thoſe generous and glorious Kings: who were no ſooner call'd to the Faith of Chriſt, but they were rais'd above the charms of this world; neither the love of eaſe or their own homes, not all the Pomps and Magnificence of *Herod*'s Court, the greateſt, according to *Joſeph*, that perhaps the world had ſeen; neither this nor the apprehenſions of moſt imminent dangers

could ſtop them in the ſearch after this New-Born King, nor hinder their zeal from publick adoration: Nor was this perform'd in a ſlight manner, but by an intire caſting of themſelves and all they poſſeſt at his Royal Feet. This was fully done and ſignifyed, as St *Ber.* obſerves by the three Offerings they made; in the Gold they conſecrated to his ſervice, all the treaſure and earthly ſubſtance they poſſeſt in this world. In the Frankinſence, which ſignifies Prayer, they teſtifyed an intire devoting themſelves to a ſpiritual life for the future; for Prayer is nothing elſe but an ardent deſire of God and Heaven. By Myrrh, which keeps things from putrefaction, they dedicated themſelves to penance and mortification, which as St. *Ber.* obſerves, conſerves from the corruption of ſin: *Ne diffluens in vitia putrefiat;* leſt by the diſſolution of ſin, the ſoul may be tainted & periſh: Theſe were emblems of their future behaviour, during the reſt of their lives; they were careful never to return to their old ways, in which they had walked before their converſion, but went home as the Scripture tells us, another way, *per aliam viam*: lets follow them dear Chriſtians, and never ſtop, till we arrive as they did, at the Heavenly *Hieruſalem. Amen.*

*Hom.* 3. *de Epiph.*

*FINIS.*

# ERRATA.

PAge 3. line 7. for *the innocent* read *Innocent.* ibid. l. 12. f. *latter* r. *Letter.* p. 5. l. 4. f. *Fuſtitiæ* r. *Fuſtus.* ibid. l. 27. f. *Prophet* r. *Prophets.* f. *Governor* r. *Governors.* p. 7. l. 12. f. *happens* r. *happineſs.* p. 11. l. 6. f. *tiil* r. *till.* ibid. l. 22. f. *procures* r. *proves* p. 13. l. 16. f. *Majeſty* r. *Fuſtice.* ibid. l. 27. f. *ſuperabundavit iniquitas* r. *Abundavit delictum.* p. 21. l. 2. f. *ſaliter* r. *taliter.* p. 26. l. 8. f. *ſuppoſed* r. *ſupported.* ibid. l. 19. f. *preſerv'd* r. *preferr'd.* p. 28. l. 6. f. *libet* r. *habet.* ibid. l. 13. f. *much* r. *ſuch.* l. ult. f. *eſt* r. *ſunt.* p. 29. l. 9. dele *poſtquam.*

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